The National Lawyers Guild Stands in Support of the Prairieland Defendants Facing Unchecked Federal Repression

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From the Dallas-Worth NLG Chapter:

On July 4th, a noise demonstration took place outside of the ICE Prairieland Detention Center in Texas. What was a typical pro-immigrant protest has turned into a massive federal investigation, with 16 defendants now facing criminal charges. The National Lawyers Guild (NLG), the Dallas-Fort Worth chapter of the National Lawyers Guild, the TexOma region of the NLG, the San Antonio Chapter of the NLG, and the Mass Defense Committee of the NLG stand in support of the Prairieland Defendants.

Community members went to the Prairieland Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention center in Alvarado, Texas, to rally against ICE's violent and relentless attacks on immigrants, and to express solidarity with those imprisoned inside the detention center. There was a planned noise demonstration at the facility, where fireworks were used, and other loud noises were made. Making noise outside of jails is an extremely common form of protest, extending solidarity to those behind bars. As the rally went on, ICE agents called the local police department. After local police arrived, one officer claimed to have sustained a minor injury to his neck by what the state claims was a gunshot. In response, the government has arrested 16 people, some through raids and traffic stops. Yet, through all of the federal government's criminal complaints, only two people have been described as alleged shooters.

Expansive and Unchecked State Repression

Due to unchecked state repression, people present at the noise demonstration are now facing decades of prison time and years of pre-trial detention, regardless of their actions or knowledge. For weeks, local and federal agents have terrorized friends and family members of those arrested at the rally, serving no-knock warrants and conducting widespread surveillance. Multiple people arrested were not even at the demonstration on July 4th. Most defendants remain detained without formal charges,

without legal representation, and in limbo between state and federal jurisdiction. Finding attorneys has been extremely difficult given the incredibly repressive behavior of the government.

We are witnessing state repression in real time. It is clear that police and prosecutors hope that the deplorable conditions of imprisonment will break the defendants and compel cooperation under duress. State and federal agents are wielding their power to silence people who dissent, to terrify and deter the public from exercising their rights to protest, and to make an example of the Prairieland Defendants in order to quash anti-ICE speech. The government seems determined to criminalize everyone even remotely related to the July 4th rally, regardless of their level of involvement. The flurry of arrests and severe charges are meant to suppress political organizing and free speech.

Defendants Facing Violent Jail Conditions

Lawyers who have visited the defendants say Johnson County Jail's conditions are reprehensible. At least two defendants have been placed in solitary confinement without any explanation. One defendant was forced to clean the walls of feces left by a previously held prisoner. The defendants' ability to communicate with friends and family outside the jail has been restricted at least twice, without any notice or explanation. At least three of the defendants are being strip-searched regularly, even though they are in solitary confinement. Two of the defendants are vegan and were not fed appropriate food. The jail has denied multiple defendants necessary medical accommodations such as a basic pillow and blood pressure medication, resulting in serious pain and potentially lasting injury. Additionally, trans individuals have been dead-named and misgendered by the jail, the media, and their own state-appointed attorneys, even though their names have been legally changed to reflect their gender.

Making matters worse, the majority of the defendants are under federal investigations, yet are still being held on state charges. The state's actions reflect their aim to criminalize people who stand up to ICE's excesses. We have seen similar repression in Atlanta, Georgia, Spokane, Washington, and Los Angeles, California. It is abominable to arrest and detain people simply for their proximity to an alleged offense, in the absence of probable cause. The state's case has failed to afford the defendants their due

process and is a clear violation of their rights.

To support the defendants, contribute here: https://givesendgo.com/supportDFWprotestors